



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 04/23/2024

REQUESTER: Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager

PRESENTER: Scott Sturtz, P. E., Interim Public Works Director

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF AMENDMENT ONE TO CONTRACT K-2324-50: AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BY AND BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA FOR EXPANSION OF THE NORMAN ON-DEMAND MICROTRANSIT PILOT PROGRAM AS OUTLINED IN THE STAFF REPORT.

BACKGROUND:

Over the course of fiscal year 2021-2022 (FYE 2022), City staff presented and discussed many modes of transit which prompted a request from Council for a deeper understanding of microtransit. This type of service is relatively new and intended to help fill gaps left between public fixed route bus service and the privatized taxi or rideshare services that many people are familiar with.

At the conclusion of FYE 2022, Council amended the FYE 2023 budget to include \$750,000 for a Microtransit Pilot program. In an effort to bring in expertise and fine tune what the service would look like, the City hired the consulting firm HNTB to better understand the goals of the City and explore alternative solutions within the microtransit industry that would meet those goals.

City staff and HNTB conducted two workshops with Council on October 18, 2022 and January 3, 2023 respectively. Following feedback from Councilmembers through those workshops, two recommendations were made. The first was for a microtransit pilot program consisting of turnkey microtransit service that would operate in the late evenings, Monday through Saturday either from 6pm-12am or 7pm-1am, as well as Sundays from 10am-6pm. The second recommendation was to invest in more robust software to improve existing paratransit service in partnership with EMBARK. The recommendation suggests this service be offered in a defined zone and limited in size, which could be proposed by potential vendors as a response to a Request for Proposal (RFP).

City staff and HNTB then worked to create RFP-2223-59, and proposals were scored by the selection committee using the evaluation criteria in the RFP which included: responsiveness to scope of work, past performance and references, cost, qualifications of project staff, qualifications of firm, and if the proposal included an Oklahoma-based firm or satellite office.

At the conclusion of the evaluation process, River North Transit, LLC (a wholly owned subsidiary of Via Transportation, Inc.) was selected as the most qualified proposer and Council approved Contract K-2223-164 on June 27, 2023. It is expected that some of the specifics of the service, such as the zone or fare, may be altered during the pilot period as both parties gain better understanding of the travel demands during the pilot program.

The requirements for operating characteristics and metrics listed below were included in the RFP and will be used as a part of the evaluation of the pilot program. It should be noted that the estimates from River North Transit's (Via's) proposal meets or exceeds each of these characteristics.

- Average walking distance: less than 0.10 miles.
- Maximum walking distance: less than 0.25 miles.
- Average wait time: less than 15 minutes.
- Maximum wait time: 20 minutes
- Percentage of on-time ride requests: 80%
- Average time added to shared trips: less than 8 minutes.

In the Spring of 2023, as Norman was concluding the RFP process, OU was looking to begin a similar process for their SafeRide program which offers students free rides Thurs-Sat 10pm-3am. It was identified that there may be efficiencies in combining resources to have 1 late night transit service for the community. Staff from both the City of Norman and OU worked together to combine resources with a goal of expanding the City and Via proposed service to incorporate the University's SafeRide program. On Aug. 8, 2023, Council approved Amendment 1 to K-2223-164 with River North Transit (Via Transportation) and its companion agenda item contract K-2324-50 with OU for Microtransit Services to include the SafeRide program.

This microtransit service is contracted for 12 months or until August 21, 2024, City Council may choose to extend the services as a part of the FYE 2025 budget process.

DISCUSSION:

At a Council Conference meeting on February 27, 2024, staff gave a presentation reviewing the Norman On-Demand microtransit pilot program data collected so far. This presentation covered engagement from OU students and the general public, ridership per service hour, service performance against the key performance indicators that were initially established, cost vs revenue, and some of the results of a customer satisfaction survey. In addition, Council had requested staff review expanding the service further west to encompass areas in the area of Ed Noble Parkway.

Included in the presentation were options from River North Transit, LLC (Via) for expanding the service map and extending Thursday, Friday, and Saturday late evening hours for the remainder of the existing contract. Staff requested guidance on how to move forward regarding both expansion of the current service and whether to extend the pilot program for another year. Council concurred that their desire was for the service to be expanded as presented and to extend the pilot for another year. However, once staff had more discussions with University staff, to decrease costs it was recommended to proceed with the zone expansion but not the extended hours for late night Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. This is due to the decrease in demand for SafeRide services the University has seen in the last few years during the summer

months. However, the amendment does provide for OU students to continue receiving free fare for SafeRide over the summer on Thursday, Friday, and Saturdays from 10pm-1am.

The attached Amendment 1 to Contract K-2324-50 (K-2324-50-AMD-1) shows the University agreeing to expand the existing microtransit pilot program starting on May 1, 2024, through the remainder of the City's existing contract, thereby extending the University's contract through August 21, 2024. Specifically this expansion includes:

- Expanding the zone west as shown in the attached agreement.
- Increasing the number of vehicles from 5 to 6.
- Providing free fare for OU students for SafeRide services in the summer months, May 12, 2024 through August 21, 2024, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturdays from 10pm-1am.

Please note that this is a companion item to Via's contract K-2223-164 Amendment #2.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Staff recommends that City Council approve Contract K-2324-50-AMD-1 by and between the City of Norman, Oklahoma, and the University of Oklahoma for the expansion of the microtransit pilot program as outlined in the staff report and in the revised Exhibit A: Scope of Services found in K-2223-164-AMD-2.